

CPYRGHT



ing that Israel's complaint against Syria be rejected. The first thing is that the Syrian Government, elected over an internal crisis that is far from ended, is in a difficult position. It has, on the one hand, the feeling that the Jordanians and Saudis continually foment plots against it. It is convinced, on the other hand, that neither the Syrian nor the Egyptian Army is up to a confrontation with the Israeli army. Furthermore, the Syrian government takes the Israeli warning seriously: according to intelligence received at Damascus, the Israeli military leaders have decided to take the offensive if further terrorist actions occur on the frontier.

But, and this is the second thing Mr. Goldberg learned, the incumbent Syrian government has no way to influence the leaders of the Palestinian paramilitary organization whose bases are, however, located in Syria. This organization, formed during the Algerian war, and whose principal cadres were trained first in the ranks of the National Liberation Front, then in China, has come to exercise absolute autonomy in matters of finance and armament. The predecessors of the incumbent Syrian government agreed (against the wish of the Egyptians) that the Chinese—and not the Russians or the Arabs—should feed, equip and supply the Palestinian terrorist organization. Today, the Syrians cannot restrain the Palestinian terrorists without discrediting themselves in the Arab world. They are forced to suffer the consequences of the terrorist actions at a time that seems to them ill chosen. All the Syrians can do then is hope that the U.S.S.R. and the United States will maintain the status quo.

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#### THE IMPATIENT PALLBEARERS



IN EUROPE, the big news was West German Chancellor Erhard's political crisis, and here, at least, the thought of Mao Tse-tung did not seem to be a factor. Newspapers blazoned his predicament in bold headlines: Munich's *Abendzeitung*: "Chaos in Bonn"; the nation's largest mass-circulation paper, *Bild-Zeitung*: "Erhard Finished?"; Hamburg's *Abend-echo*: "Avalanche." The powerful weekly *Der Spiegel* said:

Seventeen years after the founding of the Federal German Republic, German politics had ground to a halt. But even in this hour the head of the government, abandoned by friend and foe alike, remained true to himself—the indecisive man couldn't make the long-overdue decision to resign.

The pallbearers who would like to carry him out were standing outside the door. But all of them—Barzel [leader of the party's parliamentary group], Strauss [former Defense Minister and also Bavarian party boss], Kiesinger [Minister-President of Baden-Württemberg], Gerstenmaier [President of the Bundestag], Schröder [Foreign Minister], Dufhues [former party executive committee head]—were afraid to push open the door and reveal the bankruptcy of Christian Democratic policies.

Shortly thereafter, the "indecisive man" made a qualified decision: He would step down for an acceptable successor.

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#### HOW TO RISE ABOVE IT

IN FRANCE, President de Gaulle had problems, too—or what would be problems for anyone else. (Recent polls and a stunning party victory in a local election at Brive, traditionally a Leftist preserve, have shown him stronger than ever.) One of the most persistent is the Ben Barka

CPYRGHT

affair, dramatically revived by the appearance of Ahmed Dlimi, one of two Moroccan officials charged with complicity in the Moroccan Leftist leader's kidnaping and presumed murder, on the eve of his trial *in absentia*. So far the President has simply risen above the case by a sort of self-levitation. Writing in frustrated anger about de Gaulle's recent semiannual press conference ("The Head of State is, too often, beside the point"), Jean-Jacques Servan-Schreiber, outspoken editor of the newsweekly *L'Express*, complained:

The Court of Assizes of the Seine has been the scene of repeated caviling clap-net. Not only the verdict of justice in the Ben Barka affair, but the future of relations, not negligible, between France and the major territory of North Africa with which it is linked, are in the balance. What does the President think about it? What has he to say to the nation on this affair? Nothing.

Bechir Ben Yahmed, equally outspoken editor of *Jeune Afrique*, another weekly news magazine, founded in Tunis but now published in Paris, thought perhaps the Ben Barka affair would simply oblige de Gaulle and go away. He wrote:

Ahmed Dlimi has accepted his responsibilities. But he has not come on a "sacrificial mission" to give himself up as a prisoner pleading guilty . . . Any doubt on this point is easily satisfied by the fact that the king and government of Morocco are publicly supporting him. We await with interest Dlimi's explanations and revelations. . . .

His arrival, in any case, will delay a continuation of the trial until May of next year. Meanwhile, French, Moroccan and international public opinion will be focused on other issues. And perhaps by that time, after due deliberation, the conclusion will be that it was not a question of a kidnaping, or this kidnaping which has revolved around a killing without a corpse, but, for reasons of state, a crime that had no perpetrator.

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WHETHER because of President de Gaulle or in spite of him, French youth seem to be a happy, ambitious and altogether wholesome lot. A national canvass of 10,000 sixteen-to-twenty-year-olds by the big picture weekly *Paris Match* showed that 57.2 percent were optimistic about the future; 76 percent already had a goal in life which, for a plurality was "realization of an ideal, happiness, fulfillment"; 26.9 percent were "very satisfied" with their parents and 49.9 percent "satisfied enough," and 51.6 percent thought their chances of being happy in love were "greater than those of their elders."

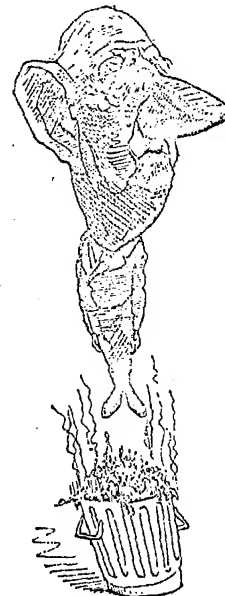
Burbled *Paris Match*:

Adults accuse them of being rebels who don't know what they want. The truth is, their revolt is to have faith in life, and they answer their accusers: "You will see—we will do better than you!"

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On that joyous note, and with a reminder to be discreet in the presence of giraffes, World Press Comment wishes you:

Merry Christmas!



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